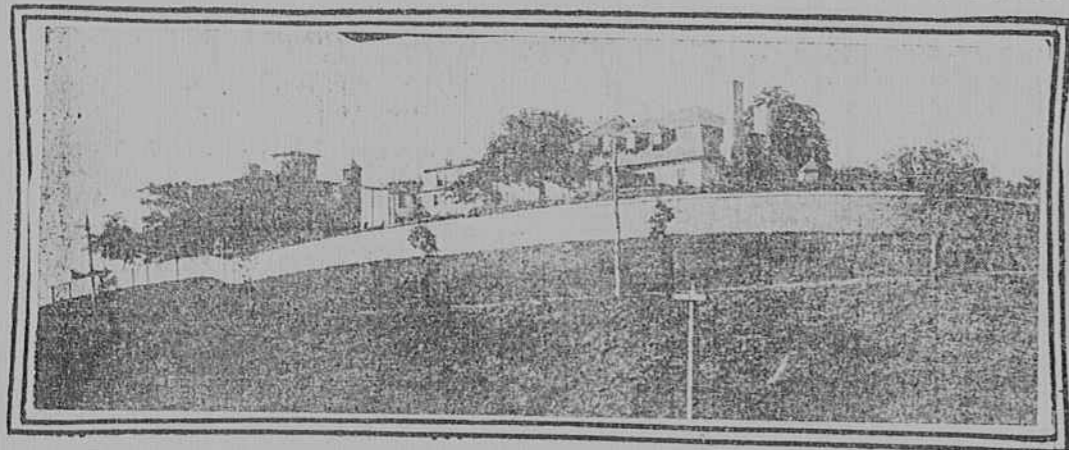


The Adams Home on Church Hill, Built by Dr. John Adams Who Laid Out Its Famous Garden--Sold by Him to the Van Lews.

BY ALICE M. TYLER.



Front view of the John Adams mansion, showing architecture of house and fence inclosing it. Photo by H. P. Cook.



The home of Colonel Richard Adams, Sr., now a part of Monte Maria Convent. Photo by H. P. Cook.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, before the capital of Virginia had been established at Richmond, Colonel Richard Adams had obtained possession by purchase many acres of ground including what was then called Richmond Hill and extending along Shreve Creek in the valley below. In 1795, a fierce battle between a Ridge tribe of Indians, the Richlands, and Colonel Adams' men took place on the hill. The Indians were routed. That was the autumn when the leaves of forest trees were turning to crimson and gold.

It was in merry May time of 1776 when Nathaniel Bacon and his army marched rapidly to the falls on the James, stormed and set fire to the Indian stockade on Richmond Hill in the famous battle of Bloody Run, when the blood of slain Indians crimsoned the walls of Bacon's Quarter Branch and ran down into the stream beneath the hill.

Colonel Adams was what was called in his day and generation a public-spirited man. If he were living now, "progressive" would be the word. He was a son of Ebenezer Adams, the English emigrant who took to wife Tabitha Cooke, sister of Bowler Cooke, of Brems, Virginia, and as already been stated, he married Elizabeth Griffin, a sister in her turn of Cyrus Griffin.

It was a cherished ambition of Colonel Richard Adams' heart to aid in the material development of Richmond, to build smooth and well-paved streets in Richmond Hill, to lay there the foundations of the city of the future, to fill in the ravines and inequalities which rendered Richmond Hill difficult of approach, above all to crown the hill with stately public buildings, in the transference of the seat of state government from Williamsburg. Colonel Adams always claimed that his contract with Colonel William Byrd in his purchase of 800 acres of land was with the understanding the Capitol building was to be erected on Richmond Hill. The failure of Thomas Jefferson to keep faith on that point led to utter estrangement between Adams and his neighbor, who he felt was the exploitation of the Byrd interests and the discrimination against his own.

But meantime Richmond Hill was the seat of the little town on the James, and its social life was led by the charming daughter of the Adams home, Tabitha, Elizabeth, Anne, Mary and Alice. These young women were sought in marriage by the most eligible men of their day. Edmund Randolph, a future Governor of Virginia, is said to have been unfortunate in his wooing of Elizabeth Adams, owing to the lovely quibbles which he elected to remain unmarried.

Thomas Adams, Colonel Richard Adams' brother, his cousin, Bowler Cooke, of Brems, and George Washington, who was to be first President of the United States, were all suitors for the hand of Elizabeth. Edmund Randolph was so much in love that he even wrote a letter to William Faulstich, father of the fair, but Sir Francis Basset, and begged him to use his influence with his daughter and prevail on her to lend a favorable consideration to him--Washington's plea.

Betty was obdurate, however, and wedded Bowler Cooke. George Washington, as all the world knows, consoled his wounded heart with Mrs. Martha Custis. Thomas Adams went off in anger to London, vowing that he would live there. But the death of Bowler Cooke and the widowhood of his former sweetheart brought him back to his native State. His second

courtship was successful and Mistress Betty Cooke became Mistress Thomas Adams, of Chester, Virginia. It is recorded to the credit of Mr. Adams that he was a devoted husband to the lady whose hand he took as much to please to her daughter, Sally Cooke, the ancestress of a branch of the Mass family in this State and city. When the Adams family of Richmond and Richmond Hill became the property of a heavily built wooden bridge and when the young ladies drove across it to visit their West End friends in their baronial coach, there was always more likely than not, a little company of cavaliers in attendance as the coach again climbed the hill in the end of the afternoon.

On Main Street, at that time, the great brick houses had begun to extend from Fourteenth Street up and the movement had begun to move later to culminate in development toward the West and away from the East.

But Colonel Richard Adams remained true to his colors and his love of Richmond Hill as long as he lived. He John Adams' son and inheritor of his father's big property, he inherited also his father's ideas and ambitions. As his first work on his own behalf he built a mansion that was the talk of the town about the year 1780. It was situated on Grace Street near Third and had an excellent basement and first floor with a grand lower hall, dining room and breakfast parlor. Above it were three drawing rooms, library and reception rooms and bedrooms. Features of the house were its front porch with eight columns and a pedimented roof, its pillared rear porch looking out upon a garden that was a veritable beauty, a terraced wilderness of flowers and trees and shrubbery, just as it was used to be, and its beautiful view of the landscape.

A Richmond man of the time, Mr. Adams, has immortalized his name and the atmosphere of this old-world garden in one of his recent novels, "Romance of a Plain Man." The descendant of a little child of the house, playing with his brothers and her trudging miniature, and among the gravest paths and beneath the shadow of the evergreens, where fairs and games might have had their place in former days and the shades of the past might have been seen, the scene of the future dwelling place across a "valley of weeping" and sadness in the mind over the constant reminder of the work of man's nature. The garden that was the mark of the day is fast being replaced by a city of steel and stone, and the old-world garden is fast being replaced by a city of steel and stone.

The first great pleasure of Adams' life was a play. A play appeared in a few years ago, in a reproduction of "Much Ado About Nothing," and order about the borders and the building. Trees were planted around and screens for the rustic stage from which the actors spoke their lines. The moon light lay like silver silver down the road where the audience were seated. The river rolled at the foot of the garden and from down the porch of the mansion, it seemed as if forms of grace and beauty who used to be its dwellers must come down and steadily to join the company on the lawn.

John Adams married into the family of George Winston of Hanover, but his wife, Margaret Winston Adams, had only to cross the wooden

bridge to visit her sisters, Mrs. Blair, Mrs. Rufford and Mrs. Rutherford. George Wayne Munford in his "Two Parsons" tells of a remarkable incident connected with the wedding of Dr. John Adams which was celebrated in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford. Mr. Munford quotes from Mr. Rutherford's diary which says:

Somewhere in the month of January, 1780, Dr. Adams was married to our sister, Betty. This marriage was greatly to our satisfaction, for we regarded him as a gentleman every way worthy of her, and having the fairest prospects before him. A remarkable circumstance occurred on this occasion for which I have never been able to account. An eight-day clock which I had imported from Liverpool and which had been running for some time, suddenly and without any apparent cause, stopped. When Dr. Adams and one of his friends came into the house, the clock struck and continued striking about two hundred times or more.

It was not long after this that Adams possessed greater influence. He was a member of the city Council and the Mayor of the city. He secured an extremely efficient police and the thorough grading of the city, leveling hills, filling up valleys and making Richmond the appearance of a city. He was a man of quick, industrious habits, a member of St. John's Church on the Hill and the father of a family. By one member of which was destined to play a conspicuous part in the history of the Adams' mansion of Richmond.

How the old house must have mourned for those who had gone from it. How its silent rooms must have echoed with the sound of the laugh and the dancing feet of other days. How the green grasses of the garden must have mourned over their emptiness and the flowers drooped for the touch of the hand that had loved and tended them.

Over the mansion fell a sinister influence, separating it and setting it apart, filling its rooms with shadow and the hearts of those around it with an uncontrollable feeling of fear and repulsion. Time went on. The shadow deepened in spite of all efforts on the part of charitable and kindly disposed friends to lift it. Then Elizabeth Van Lew, the eldest of the Van Lew family, who had been married to a man of the name of Philadelphia, and remained there for some years.

When she returned to Richmond she was a changed being. All of the natural joy and brightness of youth seemed to have dried out of her nature. She was a woman of a stern, almost morose, expression. Her husband, who had been a member of the city Council and the Mayor of the city, had died in the city of Philadelphia, and she had been married to a man of the name of Philadelphia, and remained there for some years.

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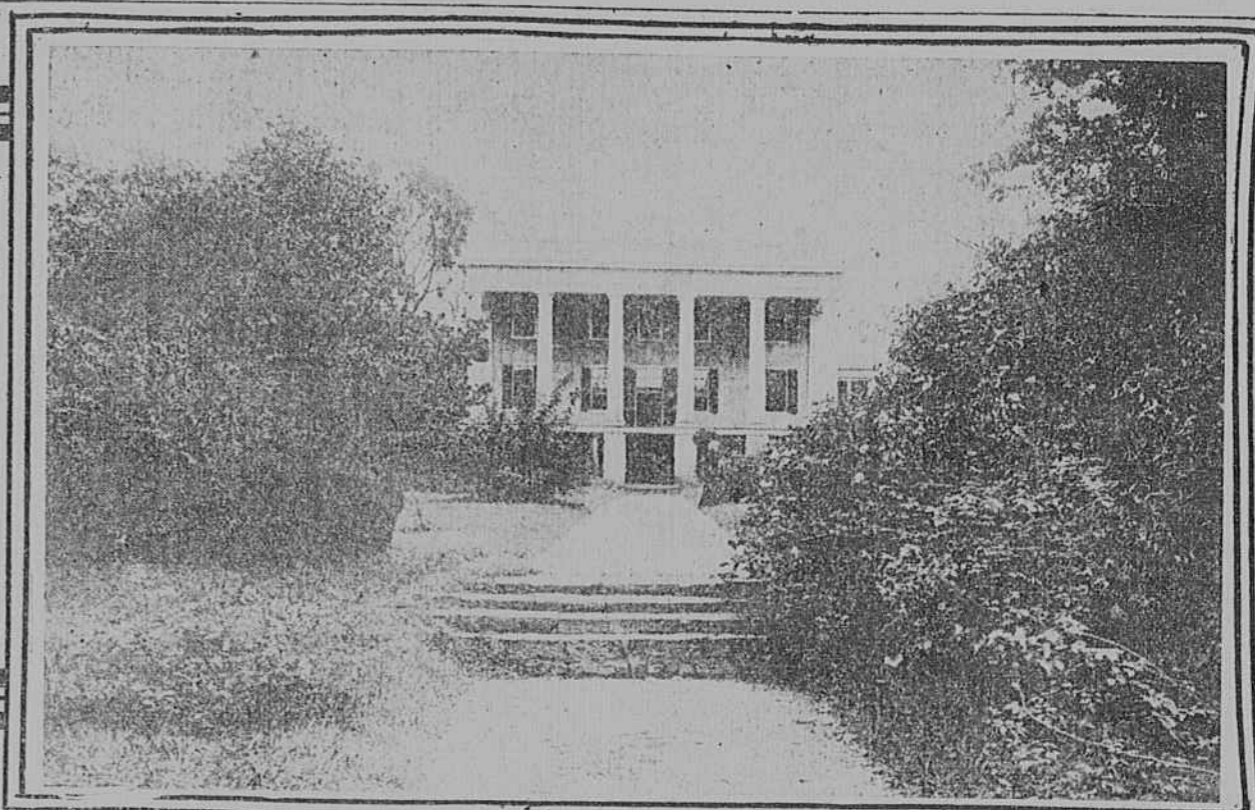
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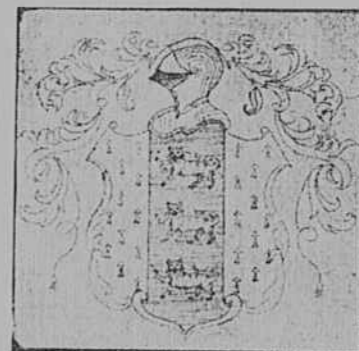
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THE ADAMS HOUSE, RICHMOND, VA.

Built by Richard Adams for his son, John Adams. This house and its garden are beautifully described in "The Romance of a Plain Man." The property is now owned by the city. Miss Elizabeth Van Lew, a noted spy in the Federal service, lived in this house from 1861 to 1865 and until her death.

Photo by H. P. Cook.



A drawing of the Adams coat-of-arms, as it was originally used by the family.

formlessness could bridge the gulf which divided the postmistress from her former friends. But there was the house on the Hill with its matchless garden, there was money in plenty where others had little, there was a carriage and horses and the clothes to wear, and the negroes to teach--these things were something by way of material compensation.

The man or woman who serves the public, however, learns that the limitations which Time sets upon the measure of its activities are inevitable. So Miss Van Lew found them. She had not been careful or provident of the price paid her for her treachery toward the people among whom she had lived.

She had used her money in some wild, impractical schemes for the benefit of the negroes. She had made some unwise business ventures. Then she had lost her position as postmistress, falling against fate, a bitter and disappointed woman, old and gray before her time, she awaited herself of improvement in one of her departments at Washington. For awhile she was at her desk there. Then her health failed and Miss Lazette came back to the Hill and to Richmond to spend the remaining years of her life in loneliness and pain. A few of the friends of old days remembered her. Her relatives were at hand to respond to her needs when she desired them. And so, slowly and painfully the years passed on to their appointed end.

The Adams house, still standing strong and fair within its garden, has become the property of the city and the proposed site of a school. A member of the Adams family is at hand to reclaim it, occupy it and make its garden a place of delight once more, perhaps it is well that the following here a strong man and true, following his hopes and his dreams, and perhaps, should be an institution for public good, rather than the temporary abode of those to whom its ideals and its faith mean nothing.

A story by an English author, on which the world has set on high, voices this sentiment. In the story of a woman who came to die and had much to give away, disposed of all except the house of her father. That she desired should be set on fire and burned to the ground. She was not her and hers in it. Perhaps it were a better thing, if such were possible, that all houses to perish with the last generation of those who appeared there. Perhaps on the other hand, it were well for walls and proportions to remain as a memorial of the builders' laying out, his honest, his generosity in materials, his skill in the noble art of architecture.

Erected about the year 1780, the Adams mansion has passed the century mark of its existence. Certainly no Richmond building could have witnessed a period of greater change than has taken place in the years since that in which Margaret Winston Adams went across the threshold of the House on the Hill to live her happy married life there. And life in Richmond had plenty to stir it, even in those days. It was busy over the organization of its volunteer fire company, over the building of the First Baptist Church, on Broad and College Streets, over the dividing of the city into three wards, and the chartering the State Bank of Virginia.

It was in the year of 1865, also, that the "Lee" gambling craze prevailed among the ladies of Richmond. The gambling fever was an epidemic. Parades were given at fashionable houses

In the town and excitement ran high over gains and losses. As Mrs. Adams was a sister-in-law of Parson Blair and he was a Presbyterian it would seem natural to suppose that she did not yield to the craze. But it is said that at the tea tables, as a rule, ladies played fast and furiously. Frequently there would be twenty, thirty or forty dollars in the pool, sometimes as much as seventy or eighty. And eighty dollars then meant a great deal more than it does now. As the games progressed, the excitement increased, and tears and sharp words became not uncommon. At last the mania reached such a height as to cause serious neglect of domestic and maternal duties, as well as much heavier losses than some of the players could afford, and the more thoughtful members of society became aware that this genuine passion for gambling must be subdued.

Then, in January of 1866, appeared in one of the Richmond papers a contribution in verse signed "Hickory Cornhill," followed by others from the same pen, and from his "Squire." Though it is rather difficult to see now how these verses could have brought the bewitched ladies to their right senses, they certainly did, and in a short time the "tea mania" was a thing of the past. Then it was discovered that the poet over the signature of "Hickory Cornhill" was none other than George Tucker, and that Edmund W. Roane was his "Squire."

There are some of "Hickory Cornhill's" lines, addressed in the form of letter to a friend in the country:

"Since you beg me to write how I pass my time, my dear friend to inform you in rhyme. And first, every morn, the debates I attend. Of the folks who the laws come to make or to mend; Where I hear now and then mighty fine declamation. About judges and bridges and banks and the nation. But last night my amusement was something more new."

"Being asked to a party of ladies at 'tea.' Ah, then, my dear neighbor, what a pleasure was seen. Each dame who was there was arrayed like a queen. Ere tea was served up they were prim as you please. But when cards were produced, all was freedom and ease. Mrs. Winston, our hostess, each lady entreated. To set the example, I pray ma'am be seated. After you, Mrs. Clutch. Nay, then, if you insist-- Your shuffle, sir, down. You prefer too to whist? I'm clear for the ladies. Come Jack, take a touch. You'll stump Mrs. Craven, and I Mrs. Clutch."

So the merry social war went on! In this year of grace the game is auction bridge, and a fair devotee of the game recently reckoned up one thing's worth at ninety dollars. It would appear that 1866 history is being repeated in 1912. Where is the "Hickory Cornhill" of to-day?

The following copy is taken from the record in the family Bible of Colonel Richard Adams, Sr., supposed to be written by himself. His marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of Le Roy Griffin and Mary Ann Bertram, his wife, on April 16, 1775, is followed by the names and births of their twelve sons and daughters. Tabitha, Elizabeth Griffin, Thomas Bowler, Richard, Jr., Anne, William, Sarah, Alice, Ebenezer, first and second, John and Samuel Griffin.

Mrs. Emily Carrington Page is in possession of family history of the Adams family which shows that Ebenezer Adams, the emigrant, came to Virginia from Essex County, England, and married Tabitha Cooke, daughter of Brems, Virginia. They were the parents of Richard Cooke, the younger, of Brems, Virginia. He was followed by his wife, Elizabeth Griffin, the parents of Dr. John Adams, of the Adams mansion.

A very distinguished ancestor of the Adams family was Henry Corbin, who arrived in Virginia in 1654, married Alice Eltonhead and lived in Lancaster and King and Queen counties and had a daughter, Winifred, who became the wife of Le Roy Griffin, of Richmond County.